

Hawaii MARINE

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VOLUME 36, NUMBER 7

WWW.MCBH.USMC.MIL

FEBRUARY 17, 2006

1/3 loses Marine, Corpsman

Lava Dog assaultman dies in Afghanistan Humvee accident

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

NANGALAM, Afghanistan — Pfc. Matthew Bertolino, 20, assaultman, Weapons Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, died Feb. 9 at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan, shortly after being airlifted from the scene of a Humvee accident southwest of Mehtar Lam in the Qarghayi District of Laghman Province in eastern Afghanistan.

Bertolino, a native of Hampstead, N.H., was ejected from the Humvee he was riding in after it hit an embankment and rolled several times on one of the many treacherous roads that make up this region of eastern Afghanistan, noted Gunnery Sgt. Adam Bala, Weapons platoon sergeant, Alpha Company, 1/3.

"His convoy was returning to Mehtar Lam from Jalalabad Airfield after a mission," said Bala, a native of San Diego. "There was no



Photo courtesy of 1st Sgt. Jerry Fowler

BERTOLINO

enemy contact. It was a tragic accident that we are all reeling from right now."

"Afghanistan is a dangerous place, whether we are engaging the enemy insurgents or simply getting from point A to point B," commented 2nd Lt. Paul Gates, Weapons platoon commander, Alpha Company, 1/3. "It is a very unfortunate situation, but we need to regroup and refocus to get ready for the next mission."

See Bertolino, A-5

Navy hospital corpsman killed by insurgents during convoy attack

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

NANGALAM, Afghanistan — Petty Officer 3rd Class John Fralish, 30, a Navy hospital corpsmen assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment from New Kingstown, Pa., was killed in action Feb. 6 northwest of Mehtar Lam in the Laghman Province of eastern Afghanistan when his convoy came under attack by enemy insurgents.

Fralish, an Iraq veteran and 1994 graduate of Cumberland Valley High School, died at the scene.

"We were on a patrol in the Gonepal Valley when the ACM (Anti-Coalition Militia) attacked us," said 2nd Lt. Austin Fletcher, Alpha Company Platoon commander, 2nd Platoon, 1/3. "HM3 (Hospital Corpsman third class) Fralish was killed in the first burst of enemy fire. We immediately returned fire, and the resulting firefight lasted approximately two or three minutes before the ACM scurried back



Photo courtesy of Chief Petty Officer Claude English

FRALISH

into the hills."

In addition to the ground battle, coalition air support was also called in, but enemy casualties were unable to be confirmed, noted Fletcher.

"HM3 Fralish always put his Marines' safety

See Fralish, A-6

Hornets buzz onto MCAF for training



Tony Blazejack

A F/A-18D Night Attack Hornet lands on the Marine Corps Air Facility here Feb. 10. This Hornet is one of nine that arrived Feb. 10 and 11. The "Bats" of Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242, Marine Aircraft Group 11, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, San Diego are aboard K-Bay to conduct training exercises with the Hawaii Air National Guard until Feb. 25. The Marine Corps employs the F/A-18D as a tactical strike aircraft while the Navy uses it as a trainer. Marine F/A-18Ds may be land-based from prepared airfields, or they can operate from expeditionary airfields. They may also be sea-based, operating from the decks of Navy aircraft carriers.

Fatal vehicle wrecks up in fiscal 2006

Jeff Schogol
Pacific Stars and Stripes

In just three months, the Navy has had more personal motor vehicle deaths than it had hoped to see for all of fiscal 2006, according to the Naval Safety Center in Norfolk, Va.

The center is reporting 30 Sailors killed in off-duty crashes from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2005. The service had set a target for the fiscal year of 29 or fewer.

The Navy has had the most deaths so far in fiscal 2006, followed by the Army with 24, the Marines with 20 and the Air Force with eight deaths, the services reported.

As of Jan. 2, the Marines were just eight deaths shy of their ceiling for motor vehicle fatalities for fiscal 2006, according to the Naval Safety Center.

The high-water mark for deaths in privately owned vehicles came in fiscal 2002, when the Army lost 202 people, the Navy 75, the Air Force 72 and the Marines 65, statistics show.

The high numbers prompted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to challenge each branch of the service to reduce those fatalities by half by fiscal

2005 and by 75 percent by fiscal 2008, officials said.

The goal has proven to be elusive so far.

In fiscal 2005, the Army reported 143 motor vehicle deaths, a decrease of about 30 percent from fiscal 2002; the Navy reported 58 deaths, down about 23 percent; the Air Force reported 46 deaths, roughly a 36 percent reduction; and the Marines reported 45 deaths, down about 31 percent, statistics show.

Asked if Rumsfeld's goals to reduce the fatalities so drastically was realistic, the Defense Department spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, wrote via e-mail that the effort to reduce such fatalities has saved lives.

"As a direct result of this effort, the military services have experienced 72 fewer PMV (personal motor vehicle) fatalities since fiscal year 2002," Krenke wrote.

For fiscal 2006, the Defense Department plans to focus its efforts on cutting down motor vehicle fatalities during the high-risk periods of summer and the holiday seasons, Krenke wrote.

"The overall goal is zero preventable accidents," Krenke wrote. "The 50 (percent) and 75 (percent) reductions keep the Department



Cpl. Michelle Dickson

A wrecked car is put on display to promote safe driving habits and discourage drivers from operating vehicles under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

focused toward that end."

But Sailors continue to die in motor vehicle crashes at an alarming rate.

According to the Naval Safety Center, speed, fatigue and inattentiveness have contributed to the deaths, but no one can account for the recent spike in fatalities, said Chuck Roberts, a supervisor at the Naval Safety Center.

"Nobody knows. It's all guesswork and conjecture. My personal opinion is (that the high number is) an aberration," Roberts said.

The Naval Safety Center also is looking into whether service members coming back from long deployments are getting into crashes while blowing off steam, but the center has found no data to support that, he said.

The 30 deaths include: *Nine motorcycle fatalities, including one person who was not wearing a helmet.

*Five fatalities involving alcohol.

See DUI, A-6

MCCS One Source presents services

Online resources available 24/7

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

Whether deployed or at their home, Marines, Sailors, and their family members are just a mouse click away from finding the answers to questions they might have by logging on to the Marine Corps Community Service One Source Web site.

Representatives from MCCS One Source will be at the Base Chapel Feb. 24 at 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. to give senior leadership here a brief about the program. Another brief will be offered to Key Volunteer Network and Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills members; and members of the Single Marine & Sailor Program at 1 p.m. at the Base Theater Feb. 28.

The representatives will also give two briefs to the general population at the Base Theater at 1 p.m. and at the Base Chapel at 6 p.m. on March 1.

The One Source site has many purposes for service members as well as family members. Before the Web site was available, many of the resources were offered only through organizations or work sections on military installations.

With MCCS One Source, users are offered a variety of services — some of which may prove to be invaluable when a service member is deployed or away from home base.

"Marine Corps Community Service One Source was created in order to be able to give information and referrals 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Jennifer L. Starnes, Marine and Family Services' information and referral specialist, Marine Corps Community Services. "It was created by the Department of Defense for active duty, Reservist, National Guard members and dependents — each branch of service actually has their own source that comes from Military One Source."

According to Starnes, family members and service members can get information anywhere in the world from the One Source Web site or by phone.

"When a person calls MCCS One Source, they will always talk to a live person and never to a machine," said Starnes, a Washington, D.C. native.

What's more, Starnes said, all consultants the caller speaks to through One Source have earned a master's degree and/or are veterans, retired service members or dependents of military service members.

Since the consultants are all in some way connected to the military, they can relate to the issues a person interested in MCCS One Source may encounter, according to Starnes.

See One Source, A-5

News Briefs

MCBH National Prayer Breakfast
There will be a National Prayer Breakfast Feb. 23 from 6 to 7:30 a.m. at Anderson Mess Hall, Building 1089. All hands are invited. Brig. Gen Steven A. Hummer, commanding general, MCB Hawaii, will be the guest speaker. Cost for breakfast is \$1.95. Doors open for breakfast at 6 a.m. For questions, contact Navy Lt. Daniel Whitaker at 257-2734.

CI/HUMINT Specialists Needed
Marine Corps Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence is looking for intelligent, motivated, multi-talented and ambitious corporals, sergeants and staff sergeants who have less than eight years time in service for a lateral move to the 0211 military occupational specialty.

For information on prerequisites, training and operations ask your career retention specialist, Marine Corps Base Hawaii Base Career Retention Specialist Master Sgt. Buckley at 257-7723 or the Marine Forces Pacific CI/HUMINT Branch at 477-8447.

MCCS One Source
Representatives from MCCS One Source will be aboard base to present their program:
Feb. 24: 10 to 11 a.m. at the Base Chapel (COs, XO's, and senior enlisted)
Feb. 28: 1 p.m. at the Base Theater (for Key Volunteers; L.I.N.K.S. team members and Single Marine & Sailor Program members)
March 1: 1 p.m. at the Base Theater (all-hands)
March 1: 6 p.m. at the Base Chapel (all-hands)
For information about the MCCS One Source briefs, call Jennifer Starnes at 257-7786.

Recruiter Assistants Needed
Want an opportunity to earn promotion points and spend up to 30 days at home without taking leave? The Marine Corps Recruiting Station in Pittsburgh, Pa., is looking for motivated Marines to serve as recruiter assistants. For more information about the recruiter assistance program in your hometown area, contact Staff Sergeant Ronald L. Samuel at (412) 395-6355.

Registration open for SSWLS
The 2006 Sea Service Women's Leadership Symposium, to be held March 21 aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii is now open for registration. The event is open to all leaders.
The primary goals for SSWLS are to actively support the sea services in the retention and career development of women and leaders of women, be an essential element in maintaining operational readiness, provide professional development and mentoring, and support gender diversity.
To register visit www.sswls.org or call 1-866-462-2838

Art Auction
There will be an All Hands Art Auction Feb. 25 from 6 to 10 p.m. at The Officers' Club. For information and tickets, contact KOSC at kosc_mcbh@yahoo.com.

Post Office Closed
The Base Post Office will be closed Saturday thru Monday in observance of President's Day. The Post Offices in Kailua and Kaneohe will be open for Saturday service. For more information, call the Base Post Office at 257-2008.

Important Phone Numbers	
On-Base Emergencies	911
Military Police	257-7114
Child Protective Service	832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO	257-8852
Business Management Hotline	257-3188
Pothole & Streetlight Repair	257-2380
Base Information	449-7110
MCBH Duty Chaplain	257-7700

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Lance Cpl. Edward C. deBree

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

The Hawaii Marine is an unofficial newspaper published every Friday by MidWeek Printing, Inc., 45-525 Luluku Road, Kaneohe, HI 96744, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Marine Corps, under exclusive contract to the U.S. Marine Corps. This civilian enterprise is an authorized publication for members of the military services.

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Submit items for the Hawaii Marine to managing editor no later than noon on the Friday prior to publication, using the following addresses:

HAWAII MARINE, Box 63062, Building 216, MCB Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii 96863
E-MAIL: EDITOR@HAWAIIIMARINE.COM
FAX: 257-1289, PHONE: 257-8835

PMO explains vehicle access

Motorists urged to follow procedures

Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson
Combat Correspondent

The issue regarding which vehicles are authorized and which are unauthorized access to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay may be confusing, if drivers do not understand vehicle requirements set by base policy and enforced by the Marines assigned to the Provost Marshal's Office. So, in an effort to help determine whether or not your vehicle is authorized aboard base, PMO offers the following.

In order for a privately owned or commercial vehicles to obtain access to this and other military facilities, drivers must obtain permission to access the base, whether it be for one day or an extended period of time.

The process for obtaining permission to bring vehicles on base begins at the Pass House where drivers must present a valid driver's license, proof of automobile insurance and state registration, and a current safety check.

These documents are usually enough for driver's to gain access to the base. However, for those who want to obtain a Department of Defense decal, registration must be done at either the Pass House in Building 1637 or in Building 601 at Camp H.M. Smith. Drivers are expected and required by base order to keep their vehicle registrations current.

Oftentimes, even though vehicles are properly registered, problems sometimes arise when vehicle ownership transfers from one person to another and the previous and new owner do not make the appropriate changes to the vehicle's registration.

"One of the problems we have is the new owner of a purchased vehicle doesn't bother to change out the decal sticker on the vehicle," said Master Sgt. Dean Jordan, services chief, PMO. "It would be nice if the buyer and seller accompanied each other to de-register and register the vehicle together."

Another problem arises when



Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

Emanuel Austin, impound custodian, fills a form for an abandoned vehicle. The orange sticker warns owners that the vehicle will be towed.

a vehicle owner fails to properly register the vehicle and fails to have a safety check performed or have a current safety check updated. In these cases, if the driver is stopped by PMO personnel, he or she run the risk of having their vehicle marked as "derelict."

There are vehicles that, for whatever reason, are parked throughout the base that are not properly registered and do not have current safety checks. These vehicles are considered "abandoned" and are brought to the impound lot.

Rather than abandon a vehicle or leave a vehicle unregistered, Emanuel Austin, impound custodian, PMO, said there are several options. Aside from the obvious option of obtaining proper registration and safety check, Austin said that owners have other options. They can park their vehicle in an approved lot, donate their vehicle, or turn it over to PMO.

"If the owner of a vehicle needs some time or assistance with their vehicle, I would be happy to help them or allow them more time," said Austin. "But to just leave the vehicle there without even calling is a very bad choice."

Derelict and abandoned vehicles that are sitting in barracks' parking lots and base housing will be towed and impounded if the owners do not take the proper steps to fix the problem, according to Austin.

If a derelict vehicle is marked with a notice and is not moved for more than 72 hours, its status may be changed to an "abandoned" vehicle status. After

being identified, it will be ticketed and tagged with a phone number that the owner is to contact to claim his or her vehicle. If the owner does not claim the vehicle, it will then be processed and impounded.

"There are a lot of vehicles located at different barracks that are marked as abandoned, and we have problems in base housing where the vehicles are taking up parking and blocking other areas," said Austin.

In addition to being unsightly and pose an inconvenience to others, these vehicles could potentially cause unnecessary hazards.

"About a year and a half ago, PMO had a call into base housing," said Jordan. "There were three eight year olds pushing themselves up and down the street in an abandoned vehicle. That could have ended up with a very horrible outcome."

PMO does not presume that vehicles are always intentionally abandoned; however, in some cases, owners may be ill advised as to what they should do about their vehicle while they are on deployment, but PMO suggests that there is a simple solution.

Before service members are deployed, they must make arrangements to have their vehicles parked in a deployment lot in order to prevent leaving them in an unauthorized location or having PMO personnel impound them. The deployments lots are available to all units aboard the base.

"It's the command's responsibility to ensure that the vehicle gets into a deployment lot," said Jordan.

If a vehicle owner wants to get rid of their vehicle, PMO encourages them to donate the vehicle, rather than to leave it to be picked up and impounded.

"They can either donate it to a charitable organization, or bring it directly to us," said Austin. Vehicle owners who fail to take corrective measures to remedy discrepancies face administration action and other penalties.

According to Austin, there is now a weekly abandoned vehicle report that is sent to base units to advise them of abandoned vehicles that may be owned by unit personnel. If a Marine or Sailor assigned to a specific unit is identified as the owner of an abandoned vehicle, his or her unit must contact PMO.

"That way I know whether to allot them more time if that individual is deployed, on leave, or has any other issues that may be preventing them from fixing their vehicle at that given time."

Austin said they also keep Tagged Abandoned Vehicle reports, so that in case owners try to move their vehicles to different location on base, it is noted.

Austin said they try to maintain a schedule and keep track of how long certain vehicles have been marked. In order to reduce the number of abandoned vehicles on base, they try to tow at least eight vehicles per week with the assistance of Motor Transport on base.

The towed vehicles are taken to the impound lot located behind PMO where the owner can only retrieve it if he or she goes through the traffic bailiff and corrects all of the problems that PMO has identified.

A first offense may result in the loss of on-base driving privileges for 30 days. A second offense may be six months of no driving privileges, and the third offense may result in one year of no driving privileges, said Jordan. They will all result in a mandatory court appearance and a deduction of six base driving points – out of 12 allotted to each base driver.

For those who may be interested in donating their vehicle, call 521-4438, or contact the Auto Hobby Shop at 254-7674. For more information about derelict or abandoned vehicles, contact Emmanuel Austin at 257-2103 Ext. 322.

Honoring women of civil rights

Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson
Combat Correspondent

Over the years, women have made strides to be seen as equals by their male counterparts. African-American women have historically faced struggles in order to be seen as equal in the eyes of men and in the eyes of society.

Three notable African-American women who have helped to shape our nation's history are Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King.

Perhaps one of the most recognizable names, when thinking of the beginning of African-American history, is Harriet Tubman — one of the Underground Railroad "conductors."

Tubman, who was born into slavery as Araminta Ross in Maryland almost 200 years ago, began working as a house servant when she was a little girl. As a young teenager, she was moved to the fields and married a free black man named John Tubman.

In 1849, fearing that she and other slaves would be sold, decided escape on foot. Tubman eventually made her way to Philadelphia, Pa., where she found work, returning to Maryland the following year to retrieve her sister and her sister's two children.

By 1860, she had returned to the South a total of 19 times – each time to bring friends and family to freedom.

She became good friends with the abolitionists of that day and took part in anti-slavery meetings. She also worked for the Union Army as a cook, nurse and spy during the Civil War.

Tubman eventually settled down in Auburn, N.Y., where she spent the rest of her days. She died in 1913.

A more modern-day martyr is Rosa Parks, who, on Dec. 1, 1955, refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Her action on that day began the modern day civil rights movement in the United States.

Parks was born in Tuskegee, Ala., and as a girl attended the Montgomery Industrial School for Girls, a private school which stressed self-worth for women. She went on to graduate from the Alabama State Teachers College and settled with her husband Raymond Parks in Montgomery, Ala.

After the bus incident, Parks was arrested and fined for violating a city ordinance, but it led to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The association boycotted the city-owned bus company for 382 days bringing the cause to the attention of the world.

The result was a Supreme Court decision to rid Montgomery of the ordinance under which Parks was fined and to outlaw racial segregation on public transportation.

Parks continued to work for civil rights and was presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996 as well as the Congressional Gold Medal in 1999. Parks spent the rest of her days in Detroit, Mich., and passed away at the age of 92.

The most recent passing of these women was that of King's widow, Coretta Scott King, who died Jan. 30, at the age of 78.

During her life, and especially after the assassination of her husband in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, King continued to devote her life to racial equality and to her husband's legacy, working for decades for a federal holiday in his honor.

In 1969, she founded the multi-million-dollar Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. The center addressed issues that she saw breed violence such as racism, unemployment and hunger.

These women took a stand for what they believed in and risked their lives for what they thought to be right. They proved that actions — like bringing slaves to freedom and not giving up a bus seat — can change the world.

Weekend weather outlook

Today



Day — partly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms, east winds 10 to 15 mph, 50 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with showers and isolated thunderstorms, east winds 10 mph, 50 percent chance of rain.

High — 70-76
Low — 58-65

Saturday



Day — partly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms, east winds 10 mph, 50 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with scattered showers, light winds, 50 percent chance of rain.

High — 72-78
Low — 59-66

Sunday



Day — partly cloudy scattered showers, east winds 10 to 15 mph, 50 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with isolated showers, east winds at 10 to 15 mph, 50 percent chance of rain.

High — 72-78
Low — 59-66



Cpl. Christopher L. West, flight-line mechanic for HMH-363 awaits transport after having his eyes bandaged during a mass casualty and mishap drill that was conducted on base at West Field, Feb 7.

HMH-463 gets crash course



Lance Cpl. Joshua D. Strom, airframer, HMH-463, carries an injured crewmember away from a downed CH-53D Super Stallion during a mass casualty and mishap drill.



Lance Cpl. Joshua D. Strom, airframer, HMH-463, injects a needle into the arm of a Marine. Marines that participated in the Combat Lifesavers program practiced what they were taught in the classroom. Combat Lifesavers is a new program which enhances a Marine’s knowledge of first aid.

**Story and Photos by
Lance Cpl. Edward C. deBree**
Combat Correspondent

Squadron members assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter 463 participated in a mass casualty and mishap drill Feb. 7 at West Field here.

The drill included squadron personnel and two of its CH-53D Sea Stallions. The squadron’s aircraft provide heavy-lift support to the 3rd Marine Regiment as part of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Aviation Support Element.

“This drill is to prepare HMH-463 for when they head over to Iraq,” said Navy Lt. Christopher Shale, flight surgeon, HMH-463. “We need to have the Marines and Sailors react quickly if an aircraft should go down in Iraq. We also need Marines to provide medical support if a corpsman is not in the immediate area.”

The 31-year-old San Diego native said the scenario for the drill was a midair collision of two CH-53Ds that left 43 Marines and Sailors injured. In addition to HMH-463, other units on base sprung into action.

Marines and Sailors from Marine Aircraft Group 24 units played the roles of injured crewmembers. At the accident scene, HMH-463 Marines who had taken the Combat Life Savers course, an advanced version of First Aid, began working on the injured Marines and Sailors.

“I think that the junior Marines were the ones that really stood out during this drill,” said Shale. “They took what they were

taught to become combat life savers and put it into action. They were phenomenal because the corpsmen told them what to do and they did it with very little guidance, very well.”

Marines carried the crewmen away from the crash site to a secure location where they were examined and treated for injuries that ranged from burns, to broken arms and legs. The Marines and hospital corpsmen proved that they knew how to handle the situation, said Shale.

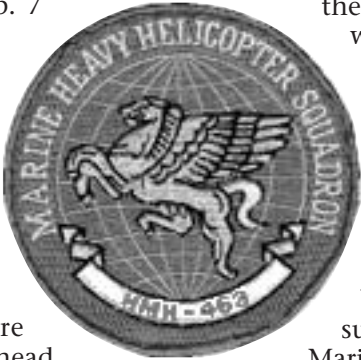
Even before the drill began, Cmdr. Keith Hanely, surgeon, MAG-24, said the Marines and Sailors would do an outstanding job of handling the drill.

“This is to get their heads into the game,” he said. “This is just in case the scenario happens, to see if 463 knows the proper procedures for handling a mishap.”

“The commanding officer also wanted to make sure that they are schooled up in what they needed to do in this case, since they are going to Iraq.”

But even though the Marines agreed that the drill was good training, there are some things that organizers would like to do to improve the scenario.

“Next time I would like to have the birds on fire,” said Shale. “I think fire and smoke would add to the realism of this type of scenario, because when there are actually different elements like fire and smoke, people tend to react a lot differently. But this was good, because what is great about drills is that it shows where the choking points are.”



Petty Officer 1st Class, Joesph L. Hughes, senior hospital corpsman, HMH-463, checks the injuries of Lance Cpl. Matthew Pallardy, ordance, MALS-24, as he is carried by Lance Cpl. Nicholas A Neidlinger, (left), avionics technician, HMH-463, and Lance Cpl. Brandon Cates, ordance technician, HMH-463.

On the skyline ... with 1/3

by Sgt. Joe Lindsay

On the Skyline is a weekly column written by Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Combat Correspondent Sgt. Joe Lindsay who is deployed to Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment's Lava Dogs in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

One shot, one kill

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

ASADABAD, Afghanistan — Time and again he's had to deal with the question. Usually, he says, it's a question that a well-meaning civilian asks, maybe a high school buddy he bumped into on leave at the local watering hole back home in Cary, N.C., a cousin at a family barbeque, or the checkout cashier at the local Walmart. If they know he's a Marine, they might ask. If they know he is an Iraq veteran, they'll probably ask. If they know he's a scout sniper, they'll definitely ask.

And, of course, there are the children. The children will always ask. That doesn't bother him so much though. He probably would have asked, too, when he was a kid.

Though the presentation of the question may vary, the question itself does not. It is always the same: "Have you ever killed anyone?"

Nearly seven years ago, a recruiter in Raleigh, N.C., probably had little inclination that he was about to make the cold call of a lifetime when he dialed the home of Enloe High School senior Chad Hoakison. As soon as Hoakison hung up the phone, he got in his car and drove to the recruiting station where he enlisted as a rifleman in the Marine Corps.

"It was probably the easiest recruiting job in the history of the Marine Corps," laughed Hoakison as he affectionately cleaned his M40-A3 sniper rifle in between missions outside of Asadabad, Afghanistan, with an obsession bordering on what some may interpret as love. (He does, after all, unashamedly refer to his rifle as "Sweet Mariah.") "I think I made that recruiter's day. But the truth was, even though I'd never talked to a recruiter before, I had always thought about joining the Marine Corps. I can remember going down to Jacksonville, North Carolina, when I was a kid and seeing the Marines run in 'boots and utes' formations. It always stuck with me. They seemed so tough, and I can remember thinking they looked like they could do anything. I knew I wanted to be like that some day."

Now Hoakison is like that – and then some. After completing his first enlistment as a rifleman and member of the Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team in Yorktown, Va., Hoakison was up for another challenge when the time for his second enlistment came around four years later. It was then that he decided to become a scout sniper.

"Just being a Marine in and of itself is elite," said Hoakison. "But I wanted to be among the elite of the elite. I wanted another challenge, so I signed up to be a sniper."

As Hoakison said he was to later find out, signing up to be a sniper is one thing, while actually making it through sniper school is an entirely different matter.

"Sniper school was brutal," commented Hoakison. "Just calling it tough doesn't do it justice. It is one of the most challenging courses the Marine Corps offers, both mentally and physically. A lot of Marines don't make it through. You have got to really want it, and you've got to have the desire to keep going when every fiber of your sanity is telling you to stop. When your brain is telling you that it's just not worth it and your body is on the threshold of collapse, the only thing I can think of that separates the guys who make it from the ones who don't is willpower."

As Hoakison was to find out; however, graduating from sniper school was merely the first hurdle in a series of challenging schools.

"Graduating sniper school is like graduating boot camp – except you become a basically trained sniper instead of a basically trained Marine," explained Hoakison. "As any Marine knows, the real test comes later – in advanced schools and in actual combat."

Hoakison has had his taste of both, having subsequently graduated from the Urban Sniper Course, the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Course and the Advanced Sniper Course, in addition to having served a combat tour as a sniper in Iraq with 1/3.

"I'm proud to be able to say I served on both battlefields of the War on Terror — Iraq and Afghanistan," said Hoakison. "Iraq gets all the media attention, but it wasn't any harder or easier there than it is in Afghanistan – just different. In Iraq, it was hot and there was a lot of urban fighting. Here we are fighting in the mountains, and it's cold. It's the same principle – kill or be killed."

Still, despite the dangers inherent in being stationed in a combat zone, Hoakison is quick to point out that the average citizen, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, appears to be thankful for the presence of U.S. and coalition forces.

"We are not fighting against the people, we are fighting for the people, and the overwhelming majority of them know this and are openly happy when they see us," commented Hoakison. "They'll invite us in for tea, and we can often gather intelligence from talking with the locals about where the ACM (Anti-Coalition Militia) and other insurgents are hiding. They want the bad guys out of their country as much as we do."



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Chad Hoakison

Sgt. Chad Hoakison, scout sniper, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment from Cary, N.C., mans his position high in the mountains outside Asadabad in the Kunar Province of eastern Afghanistan.

According to the scout snipers who serve with Hoakison, no Marine is more committed to completing that mission than Hoakison himself.

"He's a true believer," said Cpl. Seth Algrim, a mortarman, 1/3, by trade who now serves as Hoakison's observer. "He believes in what we're doing, he believes the people of Iraq and Afghanistan deserve to be free, he believes we were going to win this war, he believes in his fellow Marines and fellow snipers, and most importantly, as far as I'm concerned, he believes he's going to make every single shot he takes."

According to Algrim, that belief is based more on fact than on faith.

"He truly is an amazing shot," said the Garden City, Kan., native. "Just the other day during target practice he put three rounds through the exact same spot at 100 meters. Three shots — one hole. He can flat out get it done. My confidence in him is unshakeable."

Both his peers and superiors apparently share that confidence in Hoakison's ability equally.

"One of the hardest parts of being a scout sniper is living up to the hype," said Sgt. Dale Nissen, scout sniper, 1/3, from Omaha, Neb. "Sergeant Hoakison lives up to the hype – and then some."

"He's just an outstanding Marine and an outstanding sniper, no two ways about it," added Staff Sgt. Andrew Giermann, scout sniper platoon sergeant, 1/3, from Bloomington, Ill. "He's all about the Marine Corps and he's all about being a scout sniper. He does his job right, all the time, every time."

And that is good news as far as the infantry Marines in 1/3's line companies are concerned.

"The snipers are like a guardian over-watch for the grunts," said Gunnery Sgt. Paul Davis, company gunnery sergeant for Charlie Company, 1/3. "With the high ground here they can maneuver quickly within their teams and provide real good accurate long-range cover for us. They take care of business," admitted the Laurens, S.C. native.

According to 1st Lt. James Campbell, scout sniper platoon commander, 1/3, and officer-in-charge of Camp Blessing, Hoakison is one of the best scout snipers he has ever seen.

"Sergeant Hoakison is one of the most tactically and technically proficient Marines that I've met, regardless of rank or job title," said Campbell, a native of Newburgh, Ind. "He's got great attention to detail, great initiative, and a deep sense of mission accomplishment. He's a tremendous shot, but even more than that, he's a true warrior. He's one of those Marines that need very little guidance, and he'll go out and execute a flawless mission."

According to Hoakison, however, his most flawless mission occurred not in the streets of Fallujah or in the mountains of Afghanistan, but rather back home in the tranquility of North Carolina.

"That's where I won my girl's heart," said Hoakison, referring to his fiancée, Leigh Gilbert, who, like Hoakison, also hails from Cary. "We're going to have a fall wedding when all this is said and done. Her support, my family's support, and the support of my sniper team – Corporal's Eric Sanchez (Haskell, Texas) and Seth Algrim and Lance Corporal John Malovrh (Medford, Wisc.) – have meant more to me than I can ever say. I'm grateful to all of them."



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Chad Hoakison

View as seen through the eyes of a scout sniper's scope reveals a back country road in the Kunar Province of eastern Afghanistan.

From the Edge

Staff Sgt. Jose Dixon
Granite City, Ill.
mess chief, 1/3
Asadabad, Afghanistan



“To my wife Angelita – All I want is to love you forever, for the rest of my life and to wake up every morning with you by my side. To my children Cruz and Josef and little Leilani who is on the way, I love you all with all my heart. Know that Daddy is serving his country far away so that you can live free. Things are getting better here every day for the Afghan people. There are good people over here who want to live free. The Marines of 1/3 are going to see to it that they get that chance.”

Crash: Marine's spirit remembered

Bertolino, From A-1

Anybody who knew Pfc. Bertolino knows that's what he would have wanted."

Many of Bertolino's peers were still too shaken up by the news of his death to comment, but one Marine, Lance Cpl. Patrick Kaiser who, by all accounts, was one of Bertolino's closest friends, said Gates' comment was on the money.

"Definitely. He would want us to carry on," said Kaiser, an assaultman with Weapons Platoon, Alpha Company, 1/3, who served as Bertolino's section leader back at 1/3's home duty station of Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, as

well as on the front lines of the War on Terror in Afghanistan. "He had a very dry sense of humor, and he always kept everyone smiling. In between our tears, sometimes we can't help cracking a smile when we think about him and all the crazy things he used to say," admitted the Los Angeles native.

"He was the king of useless information," added Bala affectionately. "Just being around him and his positive energy was a morale boost for all the Marines. His sense of humor was unrivaled. He was very witty and extremely insightful. He kept everyone's spirits high."

The spirits of the Marines in Alpha Company's Weapons Platoon are understandably down with the news of Bertolino's death, but they have vowed to rally around his memory and continue the fight.

"The spirits of the Marines in Alpha Company's Weapons Platoon are understandably down with the news of Bertolino's death, but they have vowed to rally around his memory and continue the fight."

"Pfc. Bertolino understood as well as anyone that we are here to accomplish a mission – to rid Afghanistan of the insurgents and to aid this country in their quest to live in freedom with a democratic government," said 1st Sgt. Jerry Fowler, first sergeant, Alpha Company. "He wasn't your average 20-year-old. He was wise beyond his years and was an extremely intelligent young man."

"He was also one heck of a Marine – the kind of Marine who put his fellow Lava Dogs ahead of himself," continued

Fowler, a native of Moore, Okla. "He was always willing to hump the gear of another Marine if that Marine was struggling. He was a strong man, both physically and mentally. After a hard day, when other Marines were resting their weary bones, Pfc. Bertolino could be found in the weight room pumping iron."

"He was 220 pounds of pure muscle, without an ounce of fat on his body," said Kaiser. "He had an inner drive that kept him going when others just wanted to rest."

To honor Bertolino's life and his passion for weight lifting, the Marines of Alpha Company have already begun construction on a new gym that they will name in his honor.

"I think he would have liked that," said Bala. "I think he would have liked that a lot."

Foremost in the minds of the Marines, however, was not the construction of a gym in Bertolino's honor or even their own pain, but rather the anguish that his family is enduring right now, noted Gates.

"What a Marine your son was!" said Gates, a native of Oakridge, N.J., when asked if he had any words for the Bertolino family. "He was an absolute gentlemen and one of the most well disciplined and hardest working Marines I have ever had the privilege of serving with."

"He was one of the only Marines I ever met who could still have a smile on his face while humping a full load of combat gear up a mountain," said Bala. "He made the best of every situation he was in. He was tough. People don't ordinarily think of Pfc. Bertolino as a leader in the truest sense. He led by the outstanding example he set every single minute of every single day he served in the Corps."

"To Pfc. Bertolino's family in New Hampshire — it is hard for me to put into words the depth of the sorrow the Marines of Weapons Platoon, the Marines of Alpha Company, and the Marines of the entire 1/3 Lava Dog family feel for your loss," added Bala. "We wish that he was still here with us. In a way, he always will be, because we will never forget his service to his country and to his fellow Marines."

One Source:

Site goes
beyond taxes
and counseling

One Source, From A-1

"One of the more common reasons someone will use One Source is to find a counselor while their spouse is deployed," Starnes said. "Marine Corps Community Services One Source can refer them to a civilian counselor and up to six sessions will be free of charge."

Service members and family members are both eligible to seek off-base counseling through One Source. Although counseling is available through medical and Marine and Family Services, these sessions may be especially desired by those who prefer to seek assistance elsewhere.

Service members and their families can file their taxes online through Military One Source, said Starnes. The Military One Source Web site works hand-in-hand with Turbo Tax for a quick and easy way to prepare taxes, and one may get a return within 10 days, explained Starnes.

But the information offered through One Source does not end with counseling and taxes.

"Educational materials like compact discs and pamphlets can also be found on the Web site," Starnes said. "Everyone should take advantage of it because it's 100 percent free. So, why not?"

"We really are just out to give advice and help out our target audience," said Kim Gates, section head, Marine Corps Family Team Building, Headquarters Marine Corps. "We're here for pretty much anything the person may need, whether it be financial help, TriCare information, parental information or child care."

Whether married or single, Marines, Sailors, and family members can find out more uses for One Source during the upcoming presentations.

Gates said she thinks the material that will be taught at the brief is very helpful and everyone should be interested – no matter their status.

"The briefs are very helpful to Marines and Sailors who are on the verge of retirement as well, because we have connections with people in the community and can help with their future after their time in service," added Starnes.

For more information about MCCS One Source call 1-800-342-9647. To log onto the Web site, go to www.mccs-sonesource.com. Starnes may be reached at 257-7786.

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Fralish, From A-1

and well-being ahead of his own,” said Fletcher, a native of Buckhannon, W. Va. “He wasn’t the type of corpsman who was ever in the rear. He was always quick to volunteer to be on the front lines with the Marines. He was a very selfless man. The bond between Marines and their corpsmen is one of the strongest bonds there is, and our bond with HM3 Fralish was especially so. He was one of us. All the Marines in Alpha Company are hurting right now over his loss.”

“The Marines are taking his death hard,” added Capt. Thomas Kisch, company commander for Alpha Company, 1/3. “‘Doc’ Fralish was the best of the best,” continued the St. Louis Park, Minn. native. “We couldn’t have asked for a better corpsman to serve alongside with us in Alpha Company. The best way we can honor his memory is to get rid of the insurgents that plague this country and secure a lasting freedom for Afghanistan. I know that’s what ‘Doc’ would want us to do.”

News of Fralish’s death also hit his fellow corpsmen particularly hard.

“It feels like a piece of our hearts are missing,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Joe Oxenford, hospital corpsman, 1/3, who served alongside Fralish in Mehtar Lam. “Time may heal our wounds, but the space in our hearts will always be felt. He is missed and loved. The corpsmen and the Marines of Alpha Company will miss him dearly,” admitted the Virginia Beach, Va. native.

“John was a man who knew something about everything,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher Taylor, a 1/3 hospital corpsmen from Texas who also served with Fralish in Mehtar Lam. “He was a very caring person who would go out of his way for anyone. He loved being a corpsman and he loved his Marines. He was very passionate about the medical care he gave to all.”

That passion was evident in the days before his death, when Fralish treated a local Afghan girl who had injured herself.

“He was always worried about the welfare of others — whether it was Marines or the locals — he always wanted to help people,” said Fletcher.

DUI, From A-1

*Four people killed who were not wearing seat belts.

In one incident, servicemembers tried to race a train to an intersection and lost, according to a Navy administrative announcement.

“Predictably, the driver was drunk,” the announcement said.

One reason for the increase could be that more people are riding motorcycles, even if they don’t have the training and agility to control them, Roberts said.

The Marines recently reported that a rash of five motorcycle crashes since Oct. 1, 2005 has contributed to a spike in overall Marine motor vehicle deaths, officials said.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael G. Mullen has not decided to take any additional corrective measures at this time to combat motor vehicle fatalities, wrote CNO spokesman Cmdr. John Kirby via e-mail.

“The CNO is very concerned about the disappointing trend in motor vehicle mishaps,” Kirby wrote. “In his view, one Sailor or family member lost or injured in a mishap is simply one too many.”

The Navy already requires service members to go through four hours of drivers’ education, but the Navy often does not know when service members get cited for traffic violations, such as speeding or drunken driving, because most such incidents occur off base, Roberts said.

One way the Navy could combat this problem is by checking service members’ driving records to identify high-risk drivers and get them the counseling or training they need, he said.

Roberts said the idea raises privacy and legal issues but still has merit.

“There are some of us here in the safety center, like myself, who believe we are going to have to do something like this to find out who our high-risk drivers are, in order to allow their military leaders to intervene before they have an accident.”

job, but not in a stuffy way. He was just a fun guy to be around.”

Perhaps it was that sparkle in his eye and his good-natured attitude that led many of his fellow corpsmen to feel comfortable enough around Fralish to refer to him simply as “Captain America.”

“He was funny, smart, wise, caring and helpful,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Jerod Napier, hospital corpsman, 1/3, who served with Fralish in Mehtar Lam. “You couldn’t ask for a better friend than John. To sum it up, he was one of a kind. He seemed to be everywhere all the time, just like Captain America,” continued the Orlando, Fla. native, “and he also had these unique facial features to go along with his bald head.”

“That was his nickname –

Captain America, we all called him that,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Jayme Frianeza, hospital corpsman, 1/3 and Camp Blessing leading petty officer. “He was just so gung-ho about the Marines,” continued the Tumon, Guam native. “He loved being ‘green-side.’ He prided himself in being physically fit like the Marines. Whatever the Marines did, he wanted to be right there alongside them, no matter how dangerous it was. He relished being in the field with the Marines and doing the hard stuff. He died the way he lived – all out.”

“In this war, there’s going to be people – corpsmen and Marines – that we lose,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Darwin Ramos, hospital corpsman, 1/3, currently serving as the Camp Blessing independent duty

corpsman. “It’s the nature of war. People will die. My guys all know the job that we came here for. We all know the risk and what’s on the line – which is our lives.”

“Still, we weren’t ready for this one,” continued the San Diego native. “We weren’t ready to lose HM3 Fralish. We weren’t ready to lose Lance Corporal Brixey, either. (Lance Cpl. Billy Brixey Jr., a 1/3 motor transportation mechanic from Vidalia, La., died Jan. 27 in Germany two days after being seriously wounded during an insurgent attack on his convoy in Kunar Province). I don’t think you’re ever ready to lose one of your brothers.”

Despite the pain they said they are feeling, Fralish’s fellow corpsmen all echoed each other when it came to the ones who

are affected most of all by this event – his family.

“All of us would like to extend our deepest condolences to the Fralish family back in Pennsylvania,” said Chief Petty Officer Claude English, senior enlisted medical department representative, 1/3, and New Orleans native. “We would like to tell the Fralishes that John had his priorities in order. He had a solid foundation of morals and values. John was a good friend and was loved and respected by all. He is exactly what a son should be like. Hopefully the Fralishes can find some peace knowing that he was doing what he loved and was loved for what he did. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Fralish family. God bless you and God bless John Fralish.”